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THE HUMAN FACE

BY EDWARD KING

With original illustrations by F. S. Coburn.



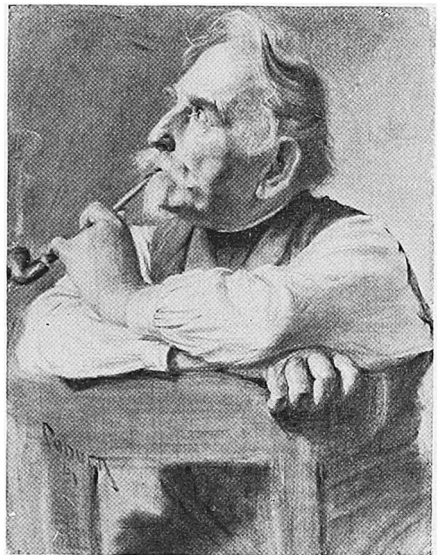
THE ART STUDENT

THE artist who, like F. S. Coburn, can accurately depict the human face, is to be congratulated. It is the most mysterious and difficult of all subjects: of infinite variety of aspect; more changeable than a landscape under sun or shadow; grandiose or petty according to the emotions of the soul which it reflects. I take it that the capable portrait-painter is a reader of souls. Alertness must be his prime characteristic: he must be quick to note the subtle change which has enhanced the brilliancy of the look, or taken all the sheen from the brow.

No face ever has the same expression for a quarter of an hour. The main lines are, of course, unchanged: but their appearance is modified by the constant play of emotion. There are no masked faces for the portrait-painter. I once heard a venerable proficient in the art of securing portraits say that diplomats made bad sitters. "The emotion which they display in endeavoring to appear emotionless," he explained, "renders their expression almost as difficult to seize as that of a ray of sunlight." Your actor is easily portrayed, because he has the trick—though it is hardly fair to so call it—of fixing an emotion, as if it were frozen, on his features.

I was once walking with Rossi, the eminent Italian tragedian, late at night on the Boulevard Haussmann in Paris. The actor was illustrating some one of his theories about the interpretation of Shakespeare's "King Lear," and at a certain point in his animated discourse: "*Tenez*, this is the way to portray it!" he said; and he ran forward a few steps and in the glare of a gas-light threw himself,—with that delightful unconsciousness of self so characteristic of the southern temperament,—into an imposing attitude as Lear cursing his ungrateful daughters.

I stood spell-bound, for the tragedian *was* Lear in that brief moment. Despite the incongruity of the crush-hat held in his hand, of the evening-dress, and of the surroundings, the majestic and awful anger of the



HIS LANDLORD

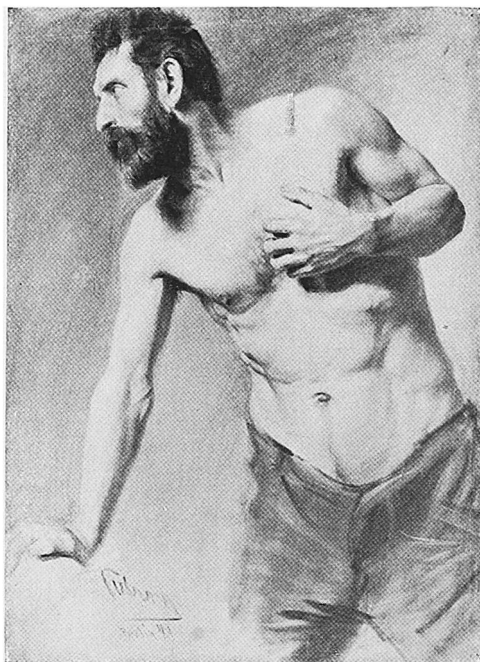
outraged king was so fixed upon Rossi's face that it dwarfed all else, and struck with awe the chance passers who beheld it. Such an artist can truly command his face when he goes to the portrait-painter. But the statesman cannot, and knowing that he cannot, he makes a difficult and capricious sitter. When Mr. Healy was painting the picture of Daniel Webster, there were mornings on which the Jove-like orator insisted on having only his garments or his hands painted. This was because he knew that on those particular occasions his massive features were not at their best.

There is no art which can adequately express a beautiful face. I should think that music, by reason of its vast variety, by the infinity of its own moods, might perhaps come much nearer to it than painting. But if the painter were allowed to make many sketches of a

face under widely differing circumstances, he might succeed at last in reproducing all its loftier aspects. None can ever paint the whole soul, nor even all its manifestations on the human face. As well try to fix upon canvas the myriad phases of Ocean.

The life of humanity is, after all, the noblest subject for the painter. Perhaps it is that one which has best chance to outlive the ages. The noble forms which enshrine, the exquisite faces which reflect, the grandest and holiest ideals of the races, were copied from every-day life by the cunning hands of the masters. It is better to have painted a Madonna than a mountain. The "Angelus" of Millet touches more deeply than the "Chill October" of Millais, because humanity is made its central charm.

The varying beauty and mystery of a fair woman's features—*divers et ondoyant*, as old Montaigne hath it,—are nobler and have a greater lesson in them for us than the changing charms of a June day.



THE MODEL



THE STUDENT'S SISTER



Drawn by Woldemar Friederich

THE WILD HUNTSMAN. VIII.—THE WOUNDED COUNT

Count Hackelberend is fatally wounded in the forest by a wild boar during one of his hunts. His men make a litter and carry him away to his Castle Treseburg, followed by the maledictions of an old crone who reminds him of the curse.